fund would consist of budgetary support from the Ministry of Mines and contribution by the profit making Central Public Sector Undertakings engaged in exploration and exploitation of mineral resources, ferrous, non-ferrous as well as coal, lignite and oil and gas to be linked to their net profit.

(c) In the report submitted by the Task Force for development of mineral industry in the North-Eastern States, candidate mineral deposits have been identified for quick exploitation, besides exploration status of known mineral resources of North-Eastern Region and action for accelerating development and industrialisation in the North-Eastern Region. The Geological Survey of India (GSI) regularly takes up investigations for exploring various mineral occurrences in the Region. Investigations are currently on for limestone in Jaintia Hills District, Meghayala, resource survey for dimensional stones in Meghalaya, and graphite in Arunachal Pradesh. Programme for appraisal of mineral/natural resource potential development on cadastral map base have also been initiated by GSI in the State of Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura. Exploration and exploitation of minerals is a continuous process depending upon the availability of prospects in the country including North-Eastern Region which is a priority area to the Central Government agencies.

Sickness of VSP

528. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant is likely to become sick;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the production of the company during last three years, year-wise and the capacity utilisation as on date;

(d) whether the Management has been requesting Central Government to convert the company's loan into equity;

(e) if so, the number of times the management requested on that score and the reaction of Government thereof; and

(f) the remedial measures being taken to revive the Company?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRIRAMESHBAIS):

(a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The details of production and capacity utilisation during the last three years are as follows:

	Production (in '000 tonnes)		
	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
Liquid steel	2380	2420	2540
Saleable Steel	2136	2136	2250
Capacity utilisation (%)			
Liquid Steel	79	81	85
Saleable Steel	80	80	85

(d) and (e) The proposal of Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (Visakhapatnam Steel Plant) to convert their loans into equity has recently been considered by Government and it has been decided to give the following financial reliefs to the Company:

(i) conversion of Rs. 791 crore interest free loan to 7% non-cumulative redeemable preference capital, redeemable after 2000-01; and

(ii) conversion of Rs. 542.47 crore of loan advanced to RINL from 1993-94 to 1995-96 into 7% non-cumulative preference capital redeemable after 10 years.

(f) In view of 'a' & *V* above, does not arise.

Revival and Modernisation of IISCO

529. SHRI GAYA SINGH: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the proposal for revival and modernisation of Indian Iron and Steel Company (IISCO) has been pending with Government for a long time; and

(b) if so, the present state of the proposal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) and (b) Indian Iron & Steel Company Ltd. (IISCO) was referred to BIFR in June 1994. Various schemes/proposals for revival and modernisation of IISCO were

considered but could not be finalised due mainly to fund constraints. A proposal for modernisation of IISCO by utilisation of funds from the Steel Development Fund (SDF) is under consideration of the Government.

As I1SCO has been referred to the BIFR, any scheme to be taken up for modernisation will have to be in accordance with the orders of the BIFR in this regard.

Boosting of Investment in Steel Sector

530. DR. B.B. DUTTA: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have proposed a 20 point agenda for boosting investment in the steel sector;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have any proposal to categorise steel as infrastructure industry and extend the benefits of infrastructure sector like exemption from minimum alternate tax and access to funds from IDFC; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) No, Sir.

(b) With the onset of the New Industrial Policy, iron and steel industry has been dereserved from the list of industries reserved for the public sector. Further, there is no requirement of Industrial licensing for setting up of iron and steel plants in the country save for certain locational restrictions. Since the Steel Industry has been opened up to the market completely, investment decisions for setting up steel plants etc. are a matter of commercial judgement on the part of the entrepreneurs.

(c) and (d) There have been requests to declare steel as infrastructure in order to avail benefits available to the infrastructure sector. However, this has not been acceded to by the Government at present.

गुजरात में इस्पात संबंत्रों में अग्नि की दुर्घटना

531. **श्री गोपालसिंह बी0 सोलंकी :** क्या इस्पात मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) क्या विगत में गुजरात में किसी इस्पात संयंत्र में एक बडी अग्नि दुर्घटना हुई थी;

(क) यदि हां, तो तत्संबंधी ब्यौरा क्या है;

(ख) इस दुर्घटना में कितने लोग हताहत हुए और कुल कितने मूल्य की संपत्ति नष्ट हुई;

(ग) इस अग्नि दुर्घटना से इस्पात संयंत्र को अनुमानत : कितना वितीय नुकसान हुआ है और संयंत्र के बन्द होने से कितने श्रमिक बोरोजगार हुए; और

(घ) भविष्य में ऐसी दुर्घटना की पुनरावृत्ति को रोकने के लिए क्या कदम उठाए गए है?

इस्पात और खान मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री रमेश बैस) : यह सूचित किया जाता है कि विद्युत संबंधी खराबी के कारण जुलाई, 1997 में मैसर्स एस्सार स्टील लिमिटेड (ई0 एस0 एल0) के हजीरा, गुजरात स्थित संयंत्र में आग लगी थी । जिससे 20 दिन तक उनके इस्पाप संयंत्र का एक भाग बन्द रहा ।

(ग) से (ड़) मैसर्स ई एस एल ने सूचित किया है कि आग से कोई हताहत नहीं हुआ और सम्पत्ति को मामूली हानि पहुंची । कार्यो की कोई क्षति नहीं हुई । कम्पनी ने बताया है कि भविष्य में इस प्रकार की दुर्घटनाओं की रोकथाम को सुनिश्चित करने के लिए उन्होंने पर्याप्त कदम उठाए हैं ।

Modernisation of Steel Plants

532. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) the names of the[1] steel plants being modernised;

(b) the estimated cost involved, plant-wise;

(c) whether there has been cost overruns in the implementation of modernisation scheme;

(d) the details of production during 1995-96 and 1996-97;

(e) the measures being taken to produce such steel in the country which is being imported at present; and

(f) if so, the details threof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) have undertaken the modernisation of the following three steel plants:

1, Durgapur Steel Plant (DSP)